

ARE PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS MORE STRESSED THAN PRIVATE? A study of work stress considering value congruence

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present research is to compare private and public organizations according to their work stress and value congruence. For this reason, we applied an inventory in a private and public organization to measure the perception of the work stress and the value congruence considering person-organization fit, value conflict and value recognition. Samples were matched in order to make comparisons according to gender, age and employed time in the organization (Nprivate=Npublic=149). Our results indicate a statistically significant correlation between stress and gender (βmen=-.420, p<.05), stress and value conflict (β=-.021, p<.05) and stress and type of organization (βprivate=.339, p<.05). Correlations between stress and value conflict were previously found by Morais, Ramos, and Jordão (2012). In the case of gender, we found several studies that show similar results and others that contradict them. According to the type of organization, we also found studies that confirm our results, however other authors had different outcomes. This research represents a contribution to the comprehension of differences that exists between public and private organizations according to stress levels.

INTRODUCTION

When job stress is experienced negatively, it becomes an element with implications for the performance of both: workers and organizations. The stress is an experience derived from the relationship between personal characteristics and organizational characteristic (Mazzola, Schonfeld, & Spector, 2011). Organizational cultures is one of the factors that have been correlated with stress (Mazzola et al., 2011), specifically considering the relationship between personal and organizational values. The relationship between these two types of values has been studied in terms of congruence and its effect on the organization has been determined in terms of satisfaction, retention, performance and welfare (Boxx & Odom, 1991, Davis, 2006; Edwards & Cable, 2009).

For the Portuguese context, studies on job stress and organizational values have not considered both variables together. Only recently, investigations have begun to consider the value congruence and its influence at the organizational level. Through its investigations in a Portuguese organization, Morais, Ramos, and Jordão (2012) identified the existence of significant relationships between job stress and value congruence measured by person-organization fit, value conflict and organizational values recognition, showing that with the increment of value congruence, decreases stress. However, it was relevant to confirm these results in other organizations.

For this reason, and because of the importance of the relationship established between organizational and personal values and job stress, we identified as the purpose of our study to verify whether there is a relationship between job stress and value congruence in a public and a private Portuguese organizations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1: What is the relationship between the work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations?
- RQ2: What is the role of individual (demographic variables) and organizational variables (sector) in the relationship between job stress and value congruence ?

METHOD

SAMPLE

Table 1. Sample distribution according to organization's sector

	Public sector	Private sector
Gender		
Male	57	57
Female	92	92
Qualifications		
Less than higher level of scholarship	77	68
High level of scholarship graduates	72	81
Age (years)		
Min – Max	25 – 64	26 – 65
Media	42,95	42,45
Standard deviation	9,115	8,559
Time working in the organization (years)		
Min – Max	1 – 39	1 – 37
Media	15,58	15,13
Standard deviation	9,444	8,381

Note: N_{private}=N_{public}=149

DATA ANALYSIS

The correlations were made using parametric methods (Pearson correlation coefficient). Correlations were made using ANOVA test with Bonferroni adjustment as a measure. The statistical program used was SPSS 20.

MATERIAL and PROCEDURE

To collect data we used an inventory for measuring the perception of job stress and value congruence. Perceived work stress was measured through a general question: "To what degree are you feeling stressed because of your work" to be answered according to a Likert scale of five points indicating: 0-None, 1-Weak, 2 -Moderate, 3-Strong and 4-Very Strong. The value congruence was measured using the APO Inventory of Ramos et al. (2012).

An email with the link to the Inventory was sent to all collaborators from the organizations, inviting them to participate in the study. In the case of the public organization, the Inventory was also distributed in paper format to workers that do not have access to the net. For the filling online we used Google Docs.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

RQ1: What is the relationship between the work stress and value congruence in Portuguese organizations?

Table 2. Correlation between value congruence and work stress

	1	2	3	4
1. Stress perceived	1,000			
Value congruence				
2. Person-Organization fit	,026	1,000		
3. Organizational value recognition	,025	,565**	1,000	
4. Value conflict	,123*	-,454**	-,291**	1,000

Note: * indicates p<.05; ** indicates p<.01

The main element of the value congruence that correlates significantly and positively with the stress is the value conflict, in organizations of both sectors. The significant correlation found between job stress and conflict confirms previous results obtained by Bouckennooghe et al. (2005) and Lamm et al. (2010), and in the case of Portuguese context by Morais (2011).

Table 3. Correlation between individual and organizational variables simultaneously with work stress

	β	Std. error	t	p
Variable intercept	2,491	,335	7,443	,000
Demographic variables				
Age	-,011	,008	-1,418	,157
Time working in the organization	,012	,008	1,609	,109
Gender				
Male	-,424	,143	-2,967	,003
Female	0*	.	.	.
Relationship between personal and organizational values				
Value conflict	,022	,007	3,087	,002
Person-organization fit	,004	,008	,488	,626
Recognition of organizational values	-,006	,013	-,447	,655
Organizational variables				
Private sector	,293	,128	2,293	,023
Public sector	0*	.	.	.

Note: * indicates parameters with zero value because of their redundancy

Table 4. Correlation between individual and organizational variables simultaneously with work stress (by sector)

	β	Std. error	t	p
Private sector				
Variable intercept	2,440	,477	5,120	,000
Demographic variables				
Age	-,013	,011	-1,158	,249
Time working in the organization	,009	,011	,848	,398
Gender				
Male	-,118	,133	-,887	,377
Female	0*	.	.	.
Relationship between personal and organizational values				
Value conflict	,023	,010	2,316	,022
Person-organization fit	,011	,012	,982	,328
Recognition of organizational values	,010	,018	,578	,564
Public sector				
Variable intercept	2,666	,476	5,599	,000
Demographic variables				
Age	-,010	,011	-,875	,383
Time working in the organization	,013	,011	1,169	,244
Gender				
Male	-,441	,160	-2,762	,007
Female	0*	.	.	.
Relationship between personal and organizational values				
Value conflict	,022	,010	2,198	,030
Person-organization fit	3,187E-005	,012	,003	,998
Recognition of organizational values	-,017	,019	-,907	,366

Note: * indicates parameters with zero value because of their redundancy

Correlations between gender and stress pointed out that women significantly experience more work stress than men.

In the case of differences considering the organization sector, our results corroborate the findings of Ramos and Jordão (2012) for the private sector. In the Portuguese private sector there is no difference between men and women according to work stress. The main differences were given by the existence of sources of stress and coping strategies that would be typical for each gender (Ramos & Jordão, 2012).

In the case of the public sector we found that it is women who significantly experience more work stress than men. Those research indicating that women are more stressed point out that this is due to the existence of female exclusive sources of stress such as the double responsibility between work tasks and family task (Choi & Chen, 2006).

RQ2: What is the role of individual (demographic variables) and organizational variables (sector) in the relationship between job stress and value congruence ?

Our results indicated that private sector workers experience work stress significantly more than public sector workers. This contradicts previous researches made in Portugal, who argue that the public sector is under more external demands, so that workers in this sector feel more stress than workers in the public sector (Ferreira & Martinez, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Our research determined the value conflict as the element of the value congruence that relates significantly and positively to the experience of work stress in both organizations analyzed. Our results also indicate the importance of considering the sector of the organization and the importance of considering the gender of the worker in studies on job stress.

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